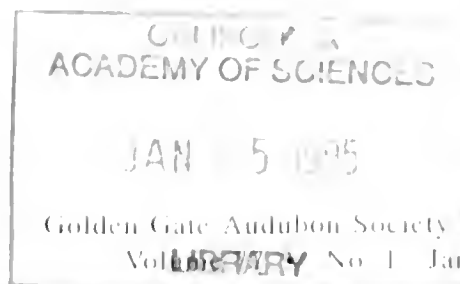




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The Gull

Port of Oakland Settlement: Life for San Leandro Bay

**January Meeting:
Wildlife at ACR's
Reserves**
back page

**Gifts and Bequests
Mare Island Conven-
tion**
Save Our Creeks
page 2

Field Trips
page 3

Observations
page 4

SF Birding Classes
page 5

**News from the Ranch
Panama Partnership**
page 6

Back Yard Birder
page 7

SYMPOSIUM PROCEED- INGS AVAILABLE

The complete proceedings of last March's scientific Symposium on the wildlife habitat values of the Alameda Naval Air Station have been published and are now available from the GGAS office for \$10. It's fascinating reading and valuable justification for including areas of the air station in the National Wildlife Refuge system.

It took eight years, tens of thousands of dollars, and tremendous dedication on the part of GGAS members and lawyers, but at last the Oakland Airport and Distribution Center lawsuits have been resolved in a settlement that will provide a \$2.5 million, 70-acre wetland restoration project at the Distribution Center site. At the time of this writing we believe the settlement will be accepted by the judge in late December. In return, the Port of Oakland will be able to commercially develop 34 acres of land next to the restoration site.

What does this settlement mean? It means increasing the odds of survival for the endangered California Clapper Rail. It means more habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl. It means better water quality for San Leandro Bay (wetlands improve water quality). It means construction jobs to restore the wetlands. It means wonderful new recreational and educational opportunities for the neighboring community and for all of the East Bay. In addition, the East Bay Regional Park District will gain ownership of these 70 acres, insuring public enjoyment of these wetland resources forever.

It's a win/win situation providing both environmental and economic benefits to the citizens and wildlife of Oakland and the East Bay.

The fight began in 1986. At that time, the Port of Oakland had, for several years, been seeking an Army Corps of Engineers permit to fill from 180 to 400 acres of wetlands at the Oakland Airport (the project description varied with time). These seasonal wetlands were providing critical habitat to tens of thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl. For example, I saw thousands of Black-bellied Plovers there in one viewing. Finally, in 1986 the Army Corps of Engineers issued a permit and the Port

started filling the Airport wetlands.

GGAS sued. It wasn't an easy decision. Every other environmental organization said it was too difficult a case, that we didn't have a chance. We knew, however, that these were the only seasonal wetlands along central San Francisco Bay available to waterbirds and their loss was unacceptable. Without the seasonal wetlands, the waterbirds would disappear. We had to act. We hired lawyers. We sued.

Other environmental groups, including the Sierra Club and Save San Francisco Bay Association, then either joined our lawsuit or entered new ones. We lost our first case in state court, but were successful in federal court! The Army Corps was forced to withdraw its permit and the filling stopped. Twenty-six acres of wetlands had been filled, but hundreds of acres were saved.

Then, shortly after, the Port began filling the 108-acre Distribution Center site, an area located immediately adjacent to Arrowhead Marsh and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Regional Park on San Leandro Bay. A state wildlife sanctuary as late as the 1930s, San Leandro Bay has been filled for development over the course of this century, its 2600 acres of rich tidal marsh reduced to only 76 acres. The 50-acre Arrowhead Marsh is the only major tidal marsh that remains. It still hosts thousands of shorebirds and waterfowl and a few California Clapper Rails, a critically-endangered species.

The Distribution Center site itself, once a tidal marsh, had been filled in the 1960s, but it wasn't a very successful effort and by 1986 the area had extensive seasonal wetlands which hosted many shorebirds and waterfowl. When we saw that these seasonal wetlands were now being filled, we sued both the Army Corps of Engineers and the Port of Oakland to halt the filling. The

Army Corps said there were no wetlands on the site. We disagreed and Judge Thelton Henderson sided with us. We won! But then there was disagreement over how many acres of wetlands were on the site. The Corps said there were only 36 acres; the Port disagreed and so did we. The Port said fewer acres, we said more. And there we remained for a good long while, lawsuits grinding on at a very slow pace.

In early 1993, the situation was this:

- 26 acres of wetlands had been filled at the Airport and a primitive road put on top of them. The Army Corps said that the Port had to be mitigate (i.e. replace) that wetlands loss, but where? It was unlikely we could get the road removed.
- The Port's filling had seriously degraded the previously existing seasonal wetlands at the Distribution Center site and the wildlife values were significantly reduced. The Port found itself unable to develop the site. However, if the lawsuit was resolved and wetlands acreage identified, the Port could then attempt to get a permit to fill those wetlands and thus develop the site. Whether they would get such a permit over environmental opposition was in some doubt, and it would certainly have led to even more litigation, but it was possible.

How could all this be resolved?

We found what we believe to be a wonderful answer for all sides. The Port has agreed to spend \$2.5 million to restore 70 acres of wetlands on the Distribution Center Site. This restoration will thus be slightly larger than the amount of wetlands lost (26 at the Airport and 36 at the Distribution Center, totalling 62 acres). In return, the Port will be able to develop 34 acres of land on the Distribution Center site and keep the 26 acres of fill at the Airport.

Usually we would ask for 2:1 mitigation, or even more, for loss of wetlands (in this case, 124 acres wetlands restored for the 62 acres lost). But the wetland acreage lost was seasonal wetlands and in our restoration proposal, seventeen acres of the restoration will be for tidal wetlands suitable for Clapper Rail habitat. Tidal restoration is very expensive and this offsets the larger wetlands acreage we might have requested.

Clapper Rail habitat has become increasingly rare and is critical for the survival of this species. An additional seventeen acres of tidal marsh will greatly benefit the rail, particularly since one of the goals of this restoration is the creation of Clapper Rail breeding habitat. Presently Arrowhead Marsh is completely inundated by the higher tides, but rails need some higher ground so their nests will not wash away. The restoration will provide this and San Leandro Bay will hopefully become the newest site for a breeding colony of California Clapper Rails thanks to the settlement.

All \$2.5 million will be spent on the restoration, monitoring, and maintenance of the new wetlands. We also hope to recover our legal expenses, although that matter is not yet assured.

Although there is general agreement among all of the parties, there are a couple of possible sticking points. The settlement can still fall apart if the Port fails to obtain permits for its development plans or if the East Bay Park District doesn't agree to take ownership of the wetlands. These are unlikely events, however, and we anticipate a successful conclusion to this settlement. If we're lucky, restoration will begin in late 1995 or early 1996. Before then, the Port, with our oversight, will be hiring consultants and contractors and designing the specifics of the restoration process.

When restoration begins, we hope many of our members will come out and help us plant wetland vegetation and be active participants in the wetlands restoration.

The irony of all this is that in 1986 we asked the Port to mitigate its destruction of 26 acres of wetlands on the Airport by restoring the Distribution Center site to wetlands. If the Port had agreed then, many dollars and many years would have been saved.

To the Port's great credit, and our delight, it has taken a much more environmentally sensitive approach to issues over the last few years. This settlement is one very significant example. The 1986 Port would have continued the lawsuits and never settled. The present Port worked very hard to bring the settlement described above to fruition and, I believe, it takes nearly as

much pleasure as we do in the thought of restoring wetlands.

We thank the Port, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Justice (which represented the Corps in Court) and the East Bay Regional Park District (which will receive ownership of the restored wetlands once the restoration is completed, thus ensuring the preservation of those wetlands) for their cooperation in bringing such a positive resolution to this seemingly endless litigation.

We also thank you, our members, for your great financial support without which we could never have continued our lawsuits.

Arthur Feinstein

SAVE OUR CREEKS

Alameda County is on a campaign to stop the dumping of garbage and debris in our creeks. If you see someone dumping illegally, or have questions about the Clean Creeks Campaign, call:

Save Our Creeks Hotline:

(510) 670-5543

TOP SECRET TO TOP ATTRACTION

Mare Island's Natural and Cultural Resources and Base Conversion

2-day conference and tours to showcase Mare Island's natural and historic attractions: February 4-5. For further information, call Arthur Feinstein at (510) 843-2222

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

For The Bird Box

**Hugh Cotter
The Gap**

For GGAS

**Linda DeLucchi
Jack and Julia Mayberry
Carlos Jordan**

In Memory of Carlos Jordan

Jane Dang

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor, or if unspecified, at the discretion of GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in The Gull as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

Field Trips Calendar

Wednesday, January 11

Mini-trip to Arrowhead Marsh, Oakland

Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 & Jean Marie Spoelman. For details, see *The Gull* for December.

Saturday, January 14

Palo Alto Baylands

Meet at 8 a.m. Take Hwy. 101 south to Palo Alto; exit at Embarcadero and drive east toward the airport and Baylands Nature Center. Continue beyond the airport to the duck pond (on the left) and park at the east end. Bring lunch, scopes, and clothes appropriate for rain and mud. We should see waterfowl, rails, and shorebirds. Trip will end in mid-afternoon. Leader: Dan Murphy (415) 564-0074. (*)

Saturday, January 21

Delta area: Lodi, Woodbridge Rd. and Staten Island

Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Rocky's Restaurant at the intersection of I-5 and State Hwy. 12. From the Bay Area, take Hwy. 580 and continue east beyond Tracy to I-5. Go north about 14 miles beyond Stockton to the intersection of Hwy. 12. (An alternate route would be to take Hwy. 12 out of Fairfield and Rio Vista to the intersection of I-5.)

We will caravan to the Lodi sewage ponds for rare shorebirds, and then to Staten Island for Sandhill Cranes and waterfowl, including Tundra Swans and Snow Geese. Dress warmly and be prepared for rain. Bring lunch and liquids. Leader: *David Yee (209) 951-1526 (*)

***Noteworthy:** David Yee, who has led this trip for GGAS for the past ten years, has been a Regional Editor for *American Birds*/ *Audubon Field Notes* for the past seven years.

Sunday, January 22

Upper San Leandro Reservoir, Moraga

Meet at 9 a.m. in the Valle Vista Staging Area for a half-day trip. Take Hwy. 24 to Orinda and exit on Moraga Way. Continue approximately four miles to Canyon Rd. Turn right at traffic signal and continue 1.2 miles to Valle Vista Staging Area on left.

Grassy hills, pines, oaks and open water provide varied habitats for landbirds and wintering waterfowl. We will hike about four miles in hilly terrain. Rain cancels. Leader: David George (510) 339-0765 (*)

Saturday, February 4

Lake Merced, San Francisco

Meet at 9 a.m. at the south end of Sunset Blvd. in the Lake Merced Circle parking area. (Muni bus service is available.) This is a good time to see grebes (six species on last year's trip) and other wintering waterfowl. Lunch is optional for this half-day trip. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983

Sunday, February 5

Panoche Valley

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 25 and J-1 in Paicines.

12.5 miles south of Hollister. From there we will drive east to 1.5 south of Los Banos. Last year we saw a variety of waterfowl, plus Bald and Golden eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Bluebirds, and both Vesper and Lark sparrows.

Considering the distance involved in this trip, be sure to fill your gas tank before leaving Hollister, and carpool from the Bay Area if possible. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Rain cancels. Leader: Chris Carpenter (510) 569-9281 day, (510) 547-2201 eve. (*)

Sunday, February 5

Lake Merritt, Oakland

Meet at 9 a.m. at Grand Ave. and El Embarcadero by the Greek Colonade. Bring binoculars, scope, and field guide if you have them. This is an excellent opportunity to observe wintering ducks and grebes at close range and to study their field identification. This trip is recommended for beginners and is wheelchair accessible. Trip ends at noon. Rain cancels. Leader: Joan Zawaski (415) 433-1700 day; (510) 530-2427 eve. (*)

Wednesday February 8

Mini-trip to Coyote Hills Regional Park

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot by the Visitors' Center at the end of the road. From the East Bay, take I-880 south to Rt. 84/ Dumbarton Bridge exit. Turn right and continue west. Exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy.; turn right and continue north one mile to Patterson Ranch Rd. and follow the signs to Coyote Hills. From San Francisco take Hwy. 101 south beyond Redwood City, cross the Dumbarton Bridge and exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy.; go north one mile to Patterson Ranch Rd. and follow signs to Coyote Hills.

We will be looking for three species of teal and other wintering waterfowl. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 & Jean-Marie Spoelman. \$ (*)

Trips marked with \$ go to parks or other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*).

Problems: if you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chair, (510) 524-2399

KENYA REVISITED

GGAS plans a repeat of last summer's successful trip to Kenya from August 4 to 21, 1995, led by Kenya's Francis Kirayi and GGAS's Alan Hopkins. The trip features deluxe accommodations, abundant wildlife, both bird and mammal, and visits to many of the major parks in Kenya.

Travel arrangements will again be made by Park East Tours and the projected cost is \$4,395 which includes round-trip air-fare from San Francisco and a \$200 donation to Golden Gate Audubon. For information on the next safari to Kenya, call Alan at (415) 664-0983, or the GGAS office at (510) 843-2222.

LOONS TO DUCKS

A **Yellow-billed Loon** in alternate plumage, found on a Monterey Bay pelagic trip on Nov. 11 (SFB, JLo), must have been a surprise as this plumage-type is rarely seen in California. This species is an exceptional rarity anytime and has been recorded very few times before December in our state. A Laysan Albatross, reported from a Cordell Bank pelagic trip Nov. 5 (DPo), is certainly more expected than the individual found at the Point Arena cove, MEN, Nov. 30 - Dec. 4 (MiM, m.ob.). Northern Fulmar numbers off our coast fluctuate widely year to year; this winter they may prove to be abundant based on several reports during the past month. For example, a Cordell Bank pelagic trip on Nov. 13 reported 150 - 200 (KH), and sea watches from Pigeon Point, SM, tallied 122 on Nov. 26 (RSTh). Flesh-footed Shearwaters continue to grace our offshore waters in good numbers with five reported on Nov. 5 from the Cordell Bank, MRN (DPo), and up to four in Monterey Bay on Nov. 27 (DLSh). Short-tailed Shearwater may also be fairly common offshore this winter if reports of 30 - 40 from Cordell Bank, Nov. 13 (KH), and 300 from Monterey Bay on Nov. 27 (DLSh) are any indication.

A rare blue-morph Ross' Goose was reported from Sacramento NWR, GLE, on Nov. 14 (DASH). A "Common Teal", the Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal, returned to Redwood Shores, SM, on Nov. 19 for the second year in a row (RSTh). An apparent Northern Pintail X American Wigeon at Abbotts Lagoon, Point Reyes, MRN Nov. 18 - 20 (JDi, KH) was described as having the body and bill of a Northern Pintail and the face pattern of a Baikal Teal. Hybrids do not always show obvious parentage and, as in this instance, may exhibit features unlike either parent-type. Eurasian Wigeon has been widely reported with many favored localities having multiple individuals. Up to three Tufted Ducks

were at the salt ponds in Alviso, SCL, through Nov. 24 (m.ob.) and three more were reported from the Sunnyvale Sewage Ponds, SCL, on Nov. 24 (SCR). It was just over a year ago that Santa Clara had only its second Tufted Duck record. Singles include one at Lake Merritt, ALA, from Nov. 16 - Nov. 26 (m.ob.) and a male returning to Spreckels Lake in Golden Gate Park, SF Nov. 20 - Dec. 4 (MHe, m.ob.). An unidentified eider which flew by Pigeon Point on Dec. 4 (DPo, RSTh) was most likely a King Eider. Up to four Harlequin Ducks near Chimney Rock, Point Reyes on 11/28 included one banded male which was probably from British Columbia (LHu). Seven Oldsquaw reports include one inland along the American River, SAC, Nov. 25 - Dec. 3 (KB, ShH, m.ob.). High numbers of Black Scoters along the northern San Mateo coast on Nov. 20 included one scoter flock with 115 and another with 48 (DSg). Barrow's Goldeneyes were well reported with a maximum of 50 at Lake Merritt, Nov. 10 - 28 (m.ob.) and one inland on the American River, SAC Nov. 27 (JTr).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

A Northern Goshawk banded at the Marin Headlands on Nov. 14 (CLF) and another reported from coastal San Mateo on Nov. 24 (BS fide RSTh) are noteworthy as this imposing creature is seldom encountered in the Bay Area. High numbers of Merlin are being reported from the Marin Headlands, as evidenced by nineteen on Nov. 12 (CLF).

An American Golden-Plover was at the Lodi Sewage Ponds, SJ, Nov. 13, as were up to five Pacific Golden-Plovers Nov. 13 - 20 (DJY). At least nine Pacific Golden-Plovers continued at outer Point Reyes through Nov. 4 (m.ob.) and two were near Pigeon Point, Nov. 25 - Dec. 4 (SCR, m.ob.). Absent last year, Mountain Plovers were observed in Panoche Valley, SBT, with seventeen there Nov. 19 (MSm). A Franklin's Gull lingered at the Lodi Sewage Ponds between Nov. 13 and

27 (DJY, m.ob.), and another was in Monterey on Nov. 21 (MCM). Inland reports of Glaucous Gulls include one along the American River near the Nimbus Fish Hatchery, SAC, Nov. 25 - Dec. 3 (ShH, KB), and another at Clear Lake, LAK, on Nov. 29 (JRW). Offshore reports of Black-legged Kittiwake include at least thirty on a Cordell Bank trip Nov. 5 (DPo). A freshly dead and oiled **Parakeet Auklet**, found at North Beach, Point Reyes, on 11/26 (fide KH) serves as a reminder that this species does occasionally occur in our offshore waters.

WOODPECKERS TO PIPITS

Four reports of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker include one still present at Ed Levin County Park, SCL, through Dec. 4 (m.ob.); one returning for its second winter to Slide Hill Park in Davis, YOL, Nov. 7 - Dec. 4 (MP); one in Stockton, SJ, on Nov. 20 (MiF); and one in Pescadero, SM, Nov. 30 (BMCK).

On Nov. 13, an Eastern Phoebe returned to West Pond in Davis, where it wintered last year, and was still present as of Nov. 26 (GEW, m.ob.). A Tropical Kingbird spent several days in lovely South San Francisco near the Oyster Point Marina Nov. 24 - 28 (PJM, AME). Mountain Bluebirds began reappearing at traditional wintering sites early in the month with four along Patterson Pass Road, ALA, on Nov. 5, and twenty there Nov. 20 (MiF). Over 100 were in Panoche Valley on Nov. 21 (GFi). A Townsend's Solitaire was along Gazos Creek, SM, on Nov. 8 (fide RSTh) and another was at Coyote Hills, ALA, on Nov. 12 (RJR). A Sage Thrasher made a surprise visit to the Alviso Environmental Education Center, SCL, Nov. 19 - Nov. 24 (PJM, m.ob.), while another along Little Panoche Road, FRE, on Nov. 26 (AME) was in an area where this species winters regularly. A Red-throated Pipit put in a brief appearance at the Salinas Sewage Ponds, MTY, on Nov. 3 (SFB).

WARBLERS TO BLACKBIRDS

A **Lucy's Warbler**, found at Lake

Merced, SF, on Nov. 26, remained through Dec. 4 (PJM). A Prairie Warbler at the Carmel River Mouth, MTY, on Nov. 8 was running late (LHu). Fifteen more Palm Warblers were reported between Nov. 3 and Nov. 28 (m.ob.). Single Black-and-White Warblers from coastal SM and MTY on Nov. 4 and Nov. 7 respectively, an American Redstart in Golden Gate Park on Dec. 4 and a Northern Waterthrush in Half Moon Bay, SM, Nov. 8 were all somewhat tardy southbound migrants. The Northern Waterthrush along Matadero Creek in Palo Alto, SCL, present since Oct. 24, was last reported Nov. 24 (m.ob.). One of the highlights of the month for many was a **Painted Redstart** at Ano Nuevo, SM, Nov. 12 - 13 (GJS, RSTh). Though a fairly regular vagrant in Southern California, this is only the third record of this species in our region.

An Indigo Bunting was at the Phipps Ranch near Pescadero on Nov. 20 (RSTh). Additional reports of Clay-colored Sparrow include one coming to a feeder in the Oakland Hills, Nov. 14 -18 (KLo), and three along Denniston Creek near Princeton on Nov. 27 (RSTh). Another, found last month near Pigeon Point, lingered until Nov. 12 (RSTh). Up to two Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Palo Alto Baylands between Nov. 6 and Dec. 4 were at an expected locale, but one at the Carmel River Mouth on Nov. 6 is exceptional and only the third county record (DR). Up to seven Swamp Sparrows in a field at Pescadero, Nov. 4 - Nov. 29 (RSTh, BMcK), and six White-throated Sparrows at the community garden in Bolinas, MRN, Nov. 21 (KH) are indicative of how numerous some of our less common wintering sparrows can be. Lapland Longspur reports include one from Ano Nuevo, Nov. 12 (RSTh), and another near Gilroy, SCL, Nov. 27 - Nov. 28 (SCR, MMR). A Chestnut-collared Longspur was at the summit of Sierra Road, east of San Jose, SCL, on Nov. 1 (SCR), where several wintered last year. One or two others were seen on the same date at Redwood Shores (PJM). The **Rusty Blackbird** at the Spaletta Ranch, Point Reyes, reported last month, stayed until Nov. 4 (m.ob.). Two additional reports of **Rusty Blackbird** were inadvertently overlooked

in last month's report: one was in Princeton, Oct. 23 - 24 (RSTh, MMR), and another was near the South Warner Wilderness Area, MOD, on Oct. 23 (JTi).

The monthly observation column is generated from reports made to the Northern California Bird Box. Some sightings are unconfirmed and numbers of birds are often best regarded as estimates or "best guesses". In general, birds in boldface are very rare in our region, geographically or seasonally. Many of these are currently reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Observers are encouraged to provide written and/or photographic documentation to the CBRC, c/o Michael Patten, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959 for any species currently on the review list. A list of review species can also be obtained from the CBRC secretary at the address above.

Observers:

Dick Ashford, Steve Bailey, Ken Burton, Chris Corben, J. Scott Cox, Jack Dineen, Al Eisner, Gil Ewing, Carter Faust, Mike Feighner, George Finger, Steve Glover, Phil Gordon, Keith Hansen, Shawn Hayes, Mike Healy, Lisa Hug, Ted Koundakjian, Keith Kwan, Jim Lomax, Kay Loughman, Michael J. Mammoser (MJM), Roger Marlowe, Michael Martin (MiM), Mac McCormick, Bert McKee, Peter J. Metropulos, Joe Morlan, Dan Nelson, David Powell, Peter Pyle, Jean M. Richmond, Robert J. Richmond, Don Roberson, Mike M. Rogers, Steve C. Rottenborn, Ruth Rudesill, Barry Sauppe, Doug Shaw, Debra Shearwater, Dan Singer, Rich Stallcup, Scott B. Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Dorothy Tobkin, John Trochet, Jerry R. White, Adam Winer, David Yee. Data thanks to Joe Morlan and the Northern California Bird Box.

Abbreviations for counties: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; FRE, Fresno; GLE, Glenn; LAK, Lake; MEN, Mendocino; MOD, Modoc; MON, Mono; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; SAC, Sacramento; SBT, San Benito; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SON, Sonoma; YOL, Yolo



SPRING BIRDING CLASSES IN SAN FRANCISCO

Evening bird classes taught by Joe Morlan will be starting January 31, February 1 and 2. All classes meet 7-9:30 p.m. in Room 222, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay St., San Francisco. Parking is free in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

The instructor is co-author of *Birds of Northern California* and coordinator of the Northern California Birdbox, sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon Society. Text is the National Geographic Society's *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, second edition; slides illustrate all classes.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, and behavior. Part A starts January 31 and ends March 14. Part B starts March 27 and ends May 9.

Field Ornithology II meets on Wednesdays. It continues with the study of alcids, hawks, and gamebirds. Part A starts February 1 and ends March 15. Part B starts March 22 and ends May 10.

Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing in-depth study of the identification and status of North American land birds, including sparrows, blackbirds, orioles, tanagers, and finches. Part A starts February 2 and ends March 16. Part B starts March 23 and ends May 11.

These classes are endorsed by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. Optional field trips on weekends may be arranged by the instructor. Please bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them.

Fees are \$70 for each seven-week course. Students need not take Part A to enroll in Part B classes. Pre-registration is recommended. For information, call San Francisco Community College, Community Services Office, at 415-561-1840.

News from the Ranch

Dan Murphy

Did you get your annual appeal letter from ACR during November? If not, you're probably not on our mailing list. You know, it's so very important to support non-profit organizations which you value. Golden Gate Audubon Society and ACR are organizations which very much deserve your support and most certainly need it.

When you give to active organizations like GGAS or ACR, your money is used productively. Let's take an over-simplified look at our past. A few members of the Marin Audubon Society saw the need to preserve the heronry at Bolinas Lagoon; they gained the support of their board of directors and that of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, scraped together a few bucks, involved a few friends in the project, and created our sanctuary, Audubon Canyon Ranch. That's pretty effective use of donated funds and volunteer time. Needless to say, ACR has taken on a life of its own, but it still has a very close relationship with its supporting chapters, now including the Sequoia and Madrone Audubon chapters.

Then, as now, the Audubon chapters focus their attention on conservation and education through field trips, members' meetings, and newsletters. Members of conservation committees work endlessly and tirelessly to preserve native habitats whether they're heronries at places like Bolinas Lagoon, city parks, or mountain forests. To the public, the press, and agencies with which we interact, we are seen as "The Audubon Society." Nobody seems to recognize chapter affiliations and everyone seems to think these groups are recipients of "buckets of bucks" from the legendary "Audubon Society." Members of our four chapters are also the people who organize and sponsor over 200 field trips which are offered free to members and the general public. Between our four chapters we publish over 40 newsletter issues, and host a like number of members' meetings each year. Then there are at least 8 Christmas Bird Counts which involve

an incredible number of volunteer hours. If I think about that very long I'll quit compiling the SF count, so let's just move right along.

ACR is surely the crowning achievement of our four chapters' conservation efforts. Its focus is on its preserves, research, and its education programs which reach out to children, adults and, in the next year, high school students through the XCEL program. Our sanctuary and its programs are incredible and we are actually recognized as one of the outstanding environmental education programs in the world. Our system of preserves has a similar reputation. The volunteer hours which go into supporting ACR's efforts are as incredible as those which go into supporting the chapters' efforts. I can't imagine how much time the docents volunteer. Then there are the ranch guides, the research associates, the advisors, the board members, the volunteers who come to workdays, and the weekend hosts. ACR's focus is just different from that of the chapters.

Representatives from the chapters and from the ACR board have met to see how we can improve our efforts. We continue to share the vision which created the Ranch and which drives the chapters. ACR has a need for volunteer hosts and for the pool of members who share in the Audubon vision. The chapters need ACR's expertise in volunteer training, fund-raising, and research.

To continue our work, we continue to need your financial support. As the tax incentives in charitable giving have diminished during recent years, so too have donations to Golden Gate Audubon Society and ACR. If you value the work of these fine organizations, I urge you to make a generous donation to either or both to help continue our work in areas of the environment, education, research, and conservation. Golden Gate Audubon's address is 2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. ACR's address is 4900 Hwy. 1, Stinson Beach, CA 94970.

BIRDS IN THE BALANCE: A PANAMANIAN PARTNERSHIP

In order to help protect neo-tropical migrant flyways, Golden Gate Audubon's Birds in the Balance Committee recently voted to form a partnership with the Panamanian Audubon office. This decision could not have been more timely and crucial. Currently, the country is addressing critical issues regarding the conversion of military lands surrounding the Panama Canal. These decisions will have tremendous consequences on the environment and economy of Panama.

In a treaty negotiated by former president Carter and General Torrijos, the canal, and corresponding military bases and infrastructure will be returned by the U.S. to the Panamanians by the year 2000. The fate of these lands will be decided by a group called the Inter Oceanic Regional Authority, comprised of businessmen and a university rector. Currently competing ideas for land conversion are being promoted by conservationists and

the Panamanian business community. The former wish to incorporate part of the land into the world's first sea-to-sea park, protect the canal's vital watershed, and invite ecotourism and other eco-friendly investment. Conversely, the Panamanian business community has drawn up plans for retirement communities, theme parks, dry-docks, factory complexes, container parts, and condos.

The area near the canal is famous among birdwatchers for the extremely high levels of biodiversity. More than 600 bird species have been tallied in this region by the Panama Chapter. Monkeys also abound in this region. And since Panama's location is along the most narrow section of Central America, its preservation is acutely important for migratory birds.

Nearly half of the area around the canal consists of forest which has been isolated for nearly a century. Along the east bank

Back Yard Birder

Meg Paulstich

Driving Interstate 10 from Ontario to the Palm Springs area is a challenge. On weekends, the highway is jammed with campers and trucks towing all manner of off-road vehicles. Subconsciously I begin to grind my teeth as I picture these people "enjoying nature" by ripping through the desert on the 2- and 3-wheeled toys. These same people bring along all the trappings of home: TVs, boom boxes, and barbecues. I even saw one individual drive up to a streamside campsite, pull out his weed-eater, and mow an area before setting up his lounge chair and TV on a stand. Ah, the wonder of the great outdoors!

Sometimes I think that I shouldn't be so quick to judge. Some people are simply unaware. And occasionally one of these unaware folk can be won over. A recent newspaper story involved a guy who regularly sped across the desert on some sort of motorcycle. When his favorite area to ride was about to be closed because of an endangered butterfly which fed only on a specific plant, he did some investigating. It turned out that he had seen these plants and butterflies in a variety of spots across the desert. Marking them, he then showed the naturalists and they were amazed and thrilled that their estimation was in error. This event was a result of a strange kind of symbiosis between a recreational cyclist and naturalists.

As we drove further on I-10, the hills became alive with windmills, the kind that create energy bought by power companies. In just a few years they have spread for miles in the stark hills. Here's a case where environmentalists thought they had a great way to gather energy without using oil, coal, or nuclear energy. Since the 1980s, windmills have been springing up in notoriously windy spots. Locally the Altamont Pass sports a goodly number of them. From the time of my first sighting, I

have considered them a blight on the landscape. Not that the Altamont Pass is breathtakingly beautiful—but it has a certain stark appeal with its smooth green or gold grassy slopes. Aside from aesthetics, these windmills are deadly to birds. According to our Art Feinstein, they killed 182 birds in 1993, 39 of them Golden Eagles, already scarce enough. It is not known exactly why this occurs, but I think it could have been anticipated.

According to an article in the November 4-10, 1994, issue of *Business and the Environment*, the San Francisco-based company Kenentech, wind energy's largest company, has hired a full-time biologist to study the problem of birds being killed. It is hoped that by doing autopsies on dead wildlife, they might find a connection between possible toxins in the birds causing judgment errors. It seems to me that the placement of the windmills in windy areas where birds of prey, in particular, might be utilizing thermals is asking for trouble. I can imagine hawks and eagles riding a thermal and not timing a swoop through the moving blades just right. Or perhaps a windmill is idle; birds perch and maybe build a nest. Suddenly the machine fires up and it's a disaster for the birds. A new tubular tower has been designed and deployed to discourage perching, which should help a little. Despite the distinct advantage of utilizing alternative energy, deaths of bird life must be addressed. Kenentech has at least been trying to solve this problem. Audubon is the only group which is calling for a moratorium on further windmills. To me, they will always be an ugly blot on the landscape.

These are only two examples of how man and his machines affect the natural order of things past. Surely, with all our knowledge and technology, we can live alongside our fellow animals in a manner that will benefit both.

Panama (cont.)

of the canal is protected land, currently connecting a greenbelt from the canal to the capital city. These areas, plus the military lands, could create the world's first sea-to-sea park.

Despite conservationists' beliefs that preserving the area would attract ecotourism, investors, and a higher quality of life for business employees, developers maintain that the park would discourage investment.

Development along the canal would be detrimental to the forest environment and bird life there. Currently 70% of the canal watershed is already deforested. Further deforestation from development could seriously impede migration beyond this corridor. In addition, deforestation causes soil erosion and does not maintain water tables.

The Panama Audubon Society and other conservation organizations are attempting to gain public support for preserving the reverted canal lands. Education of the native Panamanians about environmental issues is a critical first step. Many Panamanians are unfamiliar with birding, and do not possess

basic equipment such as binoculars to view the rich biota of their country. Our chapter can assist the Panamanians to establish a higher profile with increased effectiveness in their community, and to educate the public about the value of preserving the forests. They are requesting funds to staff and equip their office, provide environmental workshops and conferences for the general public, establish ecotourism for interested travellers, and to support outreach efforts to school-children.

Anyone interested in contributing to this project or interested in attending future meetings should contact Miles McKey at (510) 652-5854. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 16, 7:30 p.m., at 76 Hilcrest Rd., Berkeley.

WANTED: SLIDES, STORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF PANAMA

We'd like to put together a program about Panama and we need your input. If you have slides, photos, or experiences to relate, please call the office at (510) 843-2222.

Tues.- Fri. 9-12, 1-4